

Essays Rubric

| | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Improvement | Unsatisfactory |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Central Claim (Thesis) Statement</i> | Original, analytical, and argumentative claim. Central Claim statement is contextualized in the paper. Central Claim statement thoughtfully answers a question of historical significance. | Analytical and argumentative claim. Central Claim statement is contextualized in the paper. Central Claim answers a question of historical significance. | Central Claim statement contains an argument but is too broad and/or vague. Central Claim lacks explicit reasons. | Central Claim statement is unclear and/or historically inaccurate. Central Claim statement is factual and lacks reasons. Central Claim statement cannot be proven. |
| <i>Evidence</i> | All evidence explicitly and effectively proves the Central Claim. All evidence is specific, relevant, and accurate. All evidence is necessary and proves the claim. | Most evidence explicitly and effectively proves the Central Claim. Most evidence is specific, relevant, and accurate. Most evidence is necessary and proves the claim. | Evidence implicitly supports the Central Claim. Evidence explicitly connects to the Central Claim. There are examples of evidence that is vague and irrelevant. | Paper presents limited evidence in support of Central Claim. Evidence is inaccurate. The reasoning does not connect the evidence to the Central Claim. |
| <i>Organization of Paragraphs</i> | Paragraph effectively utilizes all four parts of a paragraph: Sub-Claims, evidence, analysis, and transitions. Each paragraph is necessary and moves the paper towards proving the argument. Paragraphs are thoughtfully and effectively connected. | Paragraph includes all four parts of a paragraph: Sub-Claims, evidence, analysis, and transitions. Each paragraph is necessary and moves the paper towards proving the argument. Paragraphs are connected with explicit connections. | Some paragraphs include all four parts of a paragraph: Sub-Claims, evidence, analysis, and transitions. There are repeated examples where paragraphs tell a narrative rather than move the paper towards proving the argument. Paragraphs are not clearly connecting to form a coherent essay. | Paragraphs lack the necessary elements. Paragraphs present redundant information that does not move the paper towards proving the argument. |
| <i>Reasons</i> | Reasons insightfully and clearly support evidence to the Central Claim throughout the entire paper. Central Claim is proven. Paper is cohesive. | Your reasons explicitly relate to the central claim but do not support the claim. Parts of Central Claim are proven. Reasons are based on evidence. | The reasons do not relate to the central claim or relate implicitly. The central claim is not proven. Reasons are not supported by evidence. | Reasons do not relate to the Central Claim. The Central Claim is not addressed and/or not discussed. |
| <i>Mechanics</i> | Writing is always clear and conveys an insightful purpose and point of view. In-text citations are properly formatted. | Writing is clear and conveys an appropriate purpose and point of view. In-text citations are properly formatted. | There are repeated examples of unclear and awkward writing. Writing conveys a somewhat clear and/or inconsistent purpose and point of view. In-text citations are not properly formatted at times. | Writing is confusing and conveys no clear purpose and point of view. Citations are missing or not properly formatted at all. |

Checkpoint 1: _____/10

Rubric: _____/90

Final Grade: _____/100

Question: Should Charlemagne be remembered as a great leader?

Thesis without tension: Charlemagne's empire collapsed soon after his death and therefore he should not be remembered as a great leader.

Thesis with tension: Charlemagne's own goal was to reestablish the glory of the Roman Empire, but unlike the Roman Empire, which enjoyed nearly two centuries of stability and prosperity, his empire collapsed soon after his death and therefore should not be remembered as a great leader.

Explanation:

How do I create tension?

- The following words can help but are not necessary in creating tension: Whereas, Originally, Although, Though, However, Because, But. **Note:** Using these words does not guarantee tension in your thesis.
- Opposing a commonly accepted viewpoint. One way to do this would be to use the first clause of the thesis statement to set up a commonly accepted viewpoint and use the second clause to set up your opposing viewpoint. (like the telephone example)
- Look through your evidence and find information that is unique or different from what you had previously learned. Evaluate this information to set up a contradiction in your thesis between what you initially learned and your recent discovery. **Example:** Charlemagne was known for his brutal conquests of outsiders but complimented this with relative prosperity for those within his kingdom and therefore should be remembered as a great leader.
- Explain why something you have researched or studied is surprising. **Example:** Despite China's long history of trade and naval dominance, during the Ming dynasty this trade was abruptly halted due to the resurgence of Confucian policies.

The following was taken from The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill website:

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

When reviewing your thesis at any point during the writing process, ask yourself the following:

- *Do I answer the question?* Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
- *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?* If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary or narrative, rather than making an argument.
- *Is my thesis statement specific enough?* Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"?
- *Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?* If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.
- *Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?* If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's o.k. to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper.

Chicago In-Text Citation:

Single Author

(Nairn 1997)

Multiple Authors

(Geis and Bunn 1997)

Group or Corporate Author

(Global Environment Coordination 1994)

For direct quotations the page number is also included.

(Nairn 1997, 73)

For direct quotations from sources without page numbers use subheading, chapter, paragraph number, or other organizational division of the work.

(Yetman, under "Slave Narratives during Slavery and After")

Citations taken from secondary sources quoting original works

Is generally to be avoided as researchers are expected to examine the works they cite. If the original work is not available, the original and secondary source must be cited. The original author and date would be used in the running text and as the beginning of the reference list entry. The text citation would include the words "quoted in."

text citation following mention of original source in the running text:

(quoted in Rathbun 2001)

reference list:

Sedgwick, T. 1844. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States*. New York: D. Fanshaw.
Quoted in Rathbun, L. 2001. The debate over annexing Texas and the emergence of Manifest Destiny. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (3).